Bafȍk-Yangafuk

101 The peoples who are the subject of this chapter have been given several names spelled in a variety of ways by Europeans. On German maps they appear as "Fuk," "Fȍk," or "Fu." In French reports and maps they are called "Baveuk," "Bafeuk," or "Yangafouk." All these words seem to resemble each other, and, in reality, they are identical.

[161] Physical and Human Geography. Total population: 5, 352 inhabitants.

361 Three little enclaves of these people a few kilometers long may be
461 found on the Yoko road east of Bafia. They are settled in eight villages all told and inhabit an area of very fertile soil and forest. Cacao, palmettoes, or food crops could bring them prosperity, were it not for
[161] their laziness. (The people of these villages number 1, 556.)

173 The five southernmost villages of the eight say that their members
361 come from the southeast, from the plain of the Sanaga, or from the east, from the plain of Djerem.

The two neighboring villages to the northeast are called Yalongo (see the chapter on the Yekaba and the Bamvele). It is thought that the Yalongo conquered the Bafȍk and /64/ adopted their language. Finally, the eighth village is said to be related to the first five and to have come also from Djerem.

[161] To the southeast of Yoko is an enclave whose two villages, in the middle of the prairie (445 inhabitants), claim to be related both to the Yalongo and the southern Bafȍk.

[161] About 50 kilometers north of Yoko, in the Babute country, is the enclave of Lena consisting of 260 inhabitants. It is said that they came from the south and reached their present habitat by traveling an arc of 250 kilometers via Tibati. /Map 4/

[161] The 360 inhabitants of the enclave of Yassem, in the midst of the Tikar country, 120 kilometers west of Yoko, say that they sprang from the Bamvele. We would be more inclined to say that they share a common origin with the latter. The wars among the tribes brought them to the Tikar country where they isolated themselves on their mountain. They differ from other Bafȍk in that they have adopted the [197] Islamic religion of the Tikar and that they recognize no kinship with the southern Bafȍk.

361 A single village may be found on the banks of the M'Bam, a few
161 kilometers from the town of Bafia. (It has 313 inhabitants.)

And lastly, on the right bank of the Sanaga, there are several Yangafuk villages (containing 2, 418 inhabitants) which are related to those found in the south on the Yoko road but separated from them by a thick forest. /65/

197 There it is spoken as a main language though not really a mother tongue by permanent or semipermanent immigrants, of whom the greatest number are the Bamiléké in the Cameroons and, in Gabon, the "Gabonese" of the Myéné linguistic group.

b) A Pahouinized area, including in the Cameroons the left bank of the middle Sanaga (Beti country, with Mangisa and Eton especially), Maka country around Abong-M'Bang, the left bank of the Dja in Jem and Dzimou country (1); in the Middle Congo, part of Ouesso District

1. Koch, in "Le petit bétail chez les Badjoué et Bikélé de Messaména /Small livestock among the Bajoué and Bikélé of Messamena/," Bulletin de la Société de Recherches congolaises, 13-14, March-June, 1946, gives striking examples of the penetration of Boulou into this region.

(in the west), that of the Souanké; in Gabon the left bank of the Ivindo, among the Bakwelé. Differences between the languages spoken in these areas and the Pahouin dialects are rapidly disappearing.

198 c) Areas in which Pahouin dialects serve as trade language, either
197 between tribes with different languages, or for administrative and commercial relations, even for political and /19/ religious propaganda. In the Cameroons, Ewôndo serves this purpose on the right bank of the middle Sanaga, in the M'Bam region, as well as on the left bank toward the Ubangi border in the Lom-and-Kadei region, especially in the Bertoua subdivision. Boulou has become the trade language of the Kribi region. In Spanish Guinea, Fang and Boulou are used as a common language by immigrants from the French territories. In Gabon the Myéné dialects are giving way to Fang, which is coming more and more into use, as far as the Congo-Ocean railway. In the large towns—Douala, Yaoundé, Libreville, Port-Gentil, and even Dolisie—Pahouin dialects are used by immigrants belonging to other linguistic groups.

197 The vigor of the major dialects—Boulou, Ewôndo, Fang—comes not only from the enterprising character of the Pahouin but also from
197 the work of missions which distribute a good deal of literature in these
214 dialects, while the languages of some of the neighboring populations have not been transcribed or have only given rise to scanty publications.

2. Dialects

Guthrie lists seven dialects, including three principal ones: "YAUNDE, BULU, Ntum, Meka, Zimu /Nzimu/, FAN, Make." It would probably be better to speak of three dialect areas corresponding to the three groups—Beti, Fang, Boulou—already defined, each area containing a predominant speech, which is always the one transcribed by missionaries. The importance of this sociological phenomenon is underlined by the fact that the transcribed dialects tend sometimes to extend beyond and sometimes to shrink within the corresponding ethnological area, in conjunction with nonlinguistic factors, the principal one being the religious affiliation of the speakers. Likewise, it is established that in certain areas a mother tongue coexists with a written dialect learned at mission schools and spoken by Christian converts.

The predominant dialect in the Beti area is Ewôndo, the working language of the Catholic mission, which is rapidly supplanting the Beti (Ati) dialects properly so called of the Sanaga Valley. The Eton dialect, for instance, which was more Ati than Pahouin on the eve of the 1914 war (Nekes), is today completely assimilated; Tsinga and Mangisa are on the way to being so. Finally, Ewôndo as a trade language is gaining ground in the north and east, as already indicated. In the south, on the contrary, though it may be replacing Banê and Fong and even be making superficial inroads into the Catholic cantons of the Boulou-speaking area; it is losing out to Boulou in the districts [191] evangelized by the American Presbyterian Mission. Thus the Banê, the Fong, and certain Protestant Ewôndo are in fact bilingual; they speak as their mother tongue a dialect close to Ewôndo, while they write, pray, or sing in Boulou.

Boulou is therefore gaining in the Ewôndo linguistic area in the north. Toward the east, it is gaining among the Mekaé and Kozimé, has supplanted Fang among the isolated Fang groups of the north, and serves as the cultivated language among the /20/ Cameroons Ntoumou [192] and Mvaé (except for Catholics) and as a trade language at Kribi and in Spanish Guinea. It even competes with Fang as a written language in northern Gabon. In the Catholic sectors it is putting up quite a good resistance to Ewôndo, except where it comes in contact with Banê and Fong.

Fang has supplanted Ntoumou in the Woleu-N'Tem region—except in Bitam District, where it is in competition with Boulou—and

level that the agencies of authority, of social control, are most in evidence.

The head of the family is the senior, ntôl or ntôle môt, of the adult and active men, benya bôtô, "the true men." He is not necessarily the oldest in age, because infirm old men suffer a genuine capitis diminutio /a loss of status/. The founder of the hamlet or his eldest son can still, even if infirm, preserve a certain moral authority as father, ésa, of the family, but actual authority will then be delegated to a nya môtô chosen from his brothers, sons, or nephews, the éfo'olo (Bertaut). In principle, a jal is composed of the founder, his old relatives /parents/, his younger brothers, his children and those of his sisters, his unmarried sisters, their illegitimate children and those of his daughters. Wives do not belong to the jal; their village is referred to as jañ. Of a divorced woman one would say, a keya jañ, "she has gone back to her village." The size of the nda bôt depends upon different factors: security, the /family/ head's authority, the fertility of the soil, etc. I have already pointed out how several mal can be gathered into a nlam, a proper village. Nowadays the menda me bôt are tending to decrease numerically and no longer to correspond to the jal, which can from now on combine several /menda me bôt/. The limited or household family is becoming more and more important, while the government-sponsored institution of village chiefship /chefferie/, although it is often only an imperfect substitute for the authority of the ntôl or the ésa, undermines that none the less. The size of an average nda bôt may be calculated at twenty /49/ persons (including the wives who do not belong to the jal), less in the towns and among the less prosperous people, more among large planters and the influential (minkukum).

The nda bôt used to be a religious, military, and economic unit. On the religious plane, the father, ésa, was the custodian of the biéti (Fang, biéri), the portable altar or ark of the ancestral cult containing the skulls of the ancestors; he made the decisions about initiations and bore their expense. The initiations have died out, and the missions have burned dozens, if not hundreds, of biéri. Security and colonial order have removed any interest in the ésa's military function. Only his economic role survives to some extent. He used to be the sole owner of the family goods (biôm), sole treasurer of income, and sole regulator of expenditures, of which the most important was the payment of "bride prices" (minsuba) for his younger brothers and his

sons. When cacao was introduced, cultivation was done collectively by the nda bôt, with the ésa selling the produce and taking charge of the money. The younger generation quickly tired of this state of affairs and left their families in order to have plantations of their own. In addition, the inflation of land values from the growing of export crops led to division upon the death of the ésa and brought on the splintering of the nda bôt. This had never been very stable, even before the colonial period, but the cessation of military needs made possible a precocious "swarming off," which had not occurred before except when a new nda bôt was large enough to provide for its own defense.

In spite of this disintegration, jal and nda bôt remain the basic units of Pahouin life, more so than the ayoñ. Development of private property notwithstanding, there does exist a juridical community with collective responsibility and obligatory self-help among its members. Many young people denounce this (cf. Eza Boto, Ville cruelle /Cruel City/, no. 182) and partly leave the jal in order to escape. But that is futile because the ties spread throughout the country become closer at a distance /from the jal/ and because the solidarity of the extended family is probably even stronger among emigrants than among stay-at-homes.

d. The Limited or Household Family; Kinship

The limited or household family, composed of an economically independent man, his wife, his children, sometimes old relatives /parents/, unmarried brothers and sisters, is becoming more and more important, both within the nda bôt framework and outside it. The missions have contributed a good deal to this, especially at the outset of evangelical activity, in order to separate the catechumens from their still animistic mintô mi bôt (they incline to react in the opposite direction nowadays to fight against "destructive individualism"). But economic changes have also played an important part. The household family is the unit of the migrant petty official, of the small-scale planter. There is no word for it; people say either mone nda bôt, "little extended family," or simply nda, "house."

Purely for convenience I shall discuss kinship on this level, in terms of an adult married man. /50/

177 secrets and powers (power-ngul, to be related to ngôl?). There is thus
575 a "cargo-cult" side, already observable in certain traditions and
448 pseudo traditions mentioned by Trilles and Largeau. The mixture of Christian and traditional elements in the ritual suggests bwiti, with definitely a greater ceremonial elaboration in terms of modern technology, such as representations of aircraft, submarines, etc. The liberating-hero cycle involves a putting to death (by his white brothers) and a return by parachute, plane, or submarine—there are different versions, sometimes co-existing. The society's hierarchy copies that of the /68/ administration: the master of the lodge, wearing a kepi with star, is the nzela me ngôl; he is accompanied by "presidents," "presidents in chief," "commanders," "inspectors general," "governors" and "governers general," "militiamen," doctors," etc. (1). There is

1. One of the highest officers is the "adjutant of the guard," who is in charge of the police and of carrying out legal decisions.

a parallel female hierarchy, having, in particular, a "douane" /possibly "duenna"?—Tr./, who is supposed to have an eye on good relations between households. The political purpose is clear: the ngôl hierarchy has often replaced that recognized by the administration, sometimes with positive practical results, thus connecting up with the movement for Pahouin regrouping in its Gabonese form.

575 In the Cameroons this regrouping has in fact quite a different
•777 aspect. It appears to be essentially a tentative social and political
664 *revival of clans rather than a tribal regrouping, which is not felt to* be as necessary as in Gabon. It leans especially, on the religious level, more toward disciplinary /sic/ schism than towards syncretism, at least for the time being. Some of its leaders have left or wish to leave the missions to set up national churches that would allow, for instance, polygamy, but they do not oppose Christian dogma, which they proclaim that they accept, constantly maintaining that it is rather the missionaries who have altered it, consciously or not. Here the influence of the American Presbyterian Mission is predominant. It might be said that the Cameroons clans, especially the Boulou ones, have been organized into a pattern of Presbyterian synods. The movement has been less successful among the Beti, where Catholic

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443 influence is stronger, but there too one finds associations influenced by foreign types of ecclesiastical organization.

614 Since 1946 the Boulou clans have formed associations, sometimes
576 proclaimed in conformity with the law of 1901, and since 1950 gathered into the N'Tem-Kribi Tribal Union, which covers primarily Boulou, Fong, Fang, Ntoumou, and Mvaé. Each clan has a central board elected during an annual or biennial ésulan, and local boards. Membership is not automatic: members have to apply for admission, pay subscription and entrance fees. At the core of each clan association there are "societies" of young people of both sexes, of married women, of nonvoters /abstinents/, etc. The young people's "societies" are certainly the most unusual. They were formed with official approbation at the time of the abolition of forced labor recruitment. The "societies" used to bargain with local authorities over projects like road maintenance or the construction of works of art /sic/, the money received being turned into a common account and used, either to help the members meet bride-price payments or other expenses, or—particularly—to arrange festivals and banquets.

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454 In large towns Pahouin migrants join de jure and de facto associations, generally within a tribal, not a clan, framework. These associations have protective and mutual-aid purposes /69/ and are sometimes quite powerful. To these should be related the tontines or subscription societies consisting of small numbers of laborers, servants, or minor employees, who pay into a common fund the larger part of their monthly wage, each member in turn being able to draw upon the sizable sum thus collected each month. The last two institutions are in no way specifically Pahouin, nor characteristic of the Cameroons or Gabon.

6. Law and Property

a. Source

671 Pahouin law has always been complex. Formerly, it dealt primarily with the status and condition of persons /statut et de l'état des personnes/ upon which the property system was dependent. Under the influence of the economic changes brought about by colonization, the law with regard to property has become definitely independent of the law of persons, the latter being inclined to grow simpler with the dissociation of the old social and family organizations.

301 [341] Women wore only a sort of double apron of grass or leaves, azem or abui, fastened to a belt of cylindrical steatite beads, nsanga; bracelets, mekom, of ivory or copper shaped like spools; ankle chains, bibat, of cast copper, very heavy; and an enormous necklace of cast copper, nkembé, which was put on a little girl when she entered her [764] affinal household and which could not be removed until after death, by cutting apart the body or melting the necklace or awaiting decomposition. [422] All this jewelry belonged to, and remained in, the husband's family, even in case of divorce; the ésa was the person who distributed it among his wives and daughters-in-law. Flat bracelets were made of 306 "neptunes" or "benares" /?/ imported from the coast; later on they made, and still make, rings and bracelets from cartridge cases and telegraph wire. But the origin of the cast minkembé /plural/ is still a mystery; the technique of metal casting is unknown or forgotten; placer or lode copper is very rare, not only in the present Pahouin [325] habitat but also where they seem to have come from. Furthermore, these very old necklaces resist corrosion and have a very pale patina indicating some kind of alloy; moreover, the nearest workers in bronze, the Bamum, do not make this kind of necklace.

281 [177] Men's dress at the present time is usually of the European type, from shorts and sports shirt to the surplus American cap; those who wear shoes have European footwear, leather or canvas according to their income, or in the style of the Arabic—silifa, from English "slipper" = babouche, of Hausa or Peul manufacture. Mention should be made of the helmets and kepis of umbrella-tree wood and the fake spectacles of slivers of raffia "bamboo." In the villages or at home, imported loincloths are rolled around a belt or tied behind the neck.

Women also wear a loincloth, éndelé, tied at the neck or rolled tight above the breasts when they have nothing else on, rolled at the waist when wearing the "mission jacket," éwoman (apparently from "woman"). The favorite head covering is still the kerchief, éyañese (from "handkerchief"). More and more women are also wearing cut and sewn European-style dresses, bizingi; often a kind of slip; no [941] panties except for a few young modernists (who call them caleçons, "drawers"); and internal sanitary napkins made of medicinal plants. [717] Mission activity has spread notions of prudery; formerly only those 834 past puberty were obliged to cover their sexual parts. Women did so with great care in spite of the casual nature of their clothing; the greatest insult to a woman was to uncover her vulva in public; she never

road. The missions have tried, with unequal results, to ameliorate the fate of old people without children; certain clan "societies" have also been active in this direction, but none of it goes very far. Moreover, the old people accept their lot and occasionally joke about it among themselves with the rather biting irony that seems one of the mental characteristics of the group. Some old people kill themselves "from being tired of life." According to Trilles, some used to burn themselves to death voluntarily. According to Largeau, the heirs took the initiative in this so as to make the inheritance available.

The least wretched old people are those with children, particularly sons (1), since daughters usually live with their affinal family. There

1. Cf. Eza Boto, Ville cruelle (no. 182), for an illustration of relations between mother and son.

does exist a genuine obligation for children to provide parents with food, which is sanctioned by paternal or maternal curse in case of default.

f. Death and the Afterlife

Every death is suspect, but that of a nya mɔ̂tɔ̂ more than another, because a nya mɔ̂tɔ̂ does not die: someone kills him, though it may be none other than himself. Therefore the death of a man of some importance was always followed by an autopsy: the ngengañ would cut open the body and examine the thoracic organs, nlem, the seat of intellect and will, to look for signs of sorcery, the work either of another or of the dead man should his évu have turned against him or been killed by a malignant agency. There also appears to have been a magic process, éwɔ̂mɔ̂lɔ̂, that revived the dead long enough to put questions concerning the cause of death.

If the autopsy revealed that the deceased was a sorcerer, nnem, the body was burned or thrown into a large river or perhaps buried at a crossroads far from the village. If he were mie, free of évu, the regular mortuary rites ensued. The body was washed in warm water, massaged and softened, then rubbed with baa dissolved in palm oil, wrapped in a white loincloth, watched over by armed men while the grave was made ready and the relatives /102/ and affinal kin /alliés/

du Dja region during the same period. This incarnation is probably related to the totemism or the alliance between a man and an animal élañela, which Trilles discusses at length (no. 166). The incarnation is only temporary and ends at the death or disappearance of the animal.

As a result of mission influence, nlam bekon, the land of the dead, is now divided into heaven and hell, which are none other than Zambe's village and éñôlan. Souls in purgatory seem to be confused in village minds with dissatisfied bekôn, who are always disturbing. The notion of natural death, brought about neither by sorcery nor by breaking a prohibition, has not developed at all: after all, "the wages of sin is death," and "sin" has been rendered as nsem in translations of the Scriptures. Therefore the dead continue to belong to society, even though the decline of the ancestor cult, the bieti, and of the initiations with a probable totemic character like sô, have weakened their bonds with the living.

This belief in survival perhaps explains a certain scorn of death, which is indicated not only by bravery in war and the suicides of the old, but also suicides for the sake of a point of honor: a woman kills herself in order to take revenge on her husband, a man because he considers himself offended or injured. The "one responsible" for such a suicide is severely judged by public opinion, and must pay compensation and make an expiratory sacrifice.

3. Religion and Magic

Aside from a few old people who are known as "children of the old ways" (or "of the old knowledge"), bo' biyem bi nnom, and who are treated as pagans by their children, and, even more uncommon, a few /10?/ young people who declare themselves to be agnostics, the great majority if not the mass of contemporary Pahouin claim to be attached to one of the sects that has done evangelical work in the region: French or American Presbyterian, /Roman/ Catholic, /Seventh Day/ Adventist. In fact, and with no intention of arguing over the statistics that give proportions of 105 percent "Christian" in certain districts, the influence of Christianity is indeed considerable, but it is tinged with animist survivals and revivals to an extent and in ways that only a great deal of detailed research could present accurately.

physically: "His tomb is neither above nor below, neither to the right nor to the left"), he divides his possessions, a division which is disturbed by quarrels, the machinations of younger sons or the negligence of the elder ones. He then departs beyond the river-of-the west, followed by the white men (or the coastal tribes?) who by a ruse have got hold of part of the biôm inherited by the Pahouin. The latter in turn start westward, crossing the Osoe Nnanga, then the niôm adjap (hole in the silk-cotton tree) as described earlier (see p. 19).

Nzame (Zambe) is emphatically not the creator god but the ancestor = mentor; all genealogies go back to him. Yet all the Christian missions have taken his name to express the idea of God. This mistake has come about because the word Mebe'e was rarely spoken, while Nzame turned up in all "salutations," in everything that had to do with the ancestor cult. As the original monitor he could be confused with the creator — in fact, he in a way completed "natural" creation by the magical invention of the arts and crafts. As an ancestor he was solicited in prayers (meya'alan) by his descendants, while Mebe'e was not addressed except on rare occasions—in solemn vows, at initiations. Finally, the very fact of having been misled from the first /110/ made it difficult to go back to the first translation. It may well be though that this mistake, the substitution of the creature for the creator, the deification of man, has not been without influence on the social development of the Pahouin. The Mintangan, who actually came from the nlam bekôn, the land of the dead, brought with them a genuine theological revolution, a heresy to which their material wealth gave a sure guarantee. The psychological repercussions must have been considerable.

Nowadays one hears it currently said that "Mebe'e is the old name for Zambe," and the latter seems to be permanently established in his usurped role (1); the traditions connected with the two personages

> 1. Good, the first American missionary among the Boulou, was nicknamed "Ngôô Zambe," Zambe's ransom, which may have been not merely an approximation of his name.

are inextricably mixed with Christian contributions, to such a degree that we may speak of a new theogony being formed in the syncretist cults and in some Christian schismatic movements.

773 the animal pursuing the ancestors of the Fang in order to devour them, while the legendary history of migration collected in the north shows, on the contrary, the crocodile enabling the tribe to cross the Osoé Nnanga (the python performs this service for the Beti).

776 The observation made by the authors quoted on the "unsuperstitious" character of the Pahouin and of the slight development /113/ of "fetishism" among them is to be related to the almost total absence in their mythology of beings intermediary between God and man, genii or demigods.

774 825 Aside from the bivur, to be discussed in connection with sorcery, there are only the bingungur (Fang)(Boulou, bingôngôt) shown in some legends as kinds of ogres or ghouls haunting forests and attacking travelers. According to another interpretation, these rather are evil animals endowed with intelligence and malevolence beyond that of normal members of their species, perhaps animal sorcerers. The inoffensive aardvark, mvômesila, is thus very much feared; also a sort of very rare Pithecanthropus (Fang, éngure; Boulou, éngu'u) and a mermaid, the mammywôta of the coast, no doubt a lamantin /or manatee/. For Trilles, the éngungure is a "spirit, often transformed into an animal, which sorcers obey"; may there not be a confusion here with the évur (Boulou, évu)?

775 769 As for ghosts, bekôn, it might be said that there are good ones but no nice ones. One may usually get on with the kôn of a properly buried forebear who was respected in his lifetime and even obtain useful services from him, formerly paid for by sacrifices and libations to his skull and often today by candles, Masses, or prayers (I have known Protestants to go to Catholic missionaries for exorcism). There is more difficulty /in dealing/ with the kôn of a sorcerer or with that of a stranger neither whose name nor whose skull is in one's possession.

772 917

266 Lawful /non criminelle/ anthropophagy probably had for an end, among others, that of acquiring power over the bekôn of enemies and perhaps of assimilating the rights they derived from their ancestors. This wartime cannibalism appears to have existed especially on the geographical fringes of the group and particularly along the invasion front, among the Fang proper, the vanguard of the migration. A relative or affinal kin was never eaten, only strangers, and these only by warriors (or sometimes by sons of warriors killed by the enemy). It is worth noting that for the cannibalism of the Fang and Osyéba only the "Gabonese" felt the terror described by all explorers. The

778 shall merely point out that part of this equipment, permanently assigned
789 to magical use, is étyi, taboo to the uninitiated and sometimes even to other mingengañ than the owner, that certain objects become bityi after having once been used for this purpose, while others are returned to ordinary use, and others are destroyed after use.

f. Prohibitions

784 Prohibitions, bityi, assume a large place in Pahouin life. Martrou (no. 159) has devoted a special study to them, which is very well documented but still incomplete, because of their number and diversity.

The word étyi comes from the root TYI/KI, conveying an idea of strength (cf. above, p. 133), of authority, and also of cutting, hence of prohibition; /for example, / tyik = to cut, kill, slice, decide; tyili = to render taboo; tyii = to have a taboo (étyi is the nominal-resulting form of the last verb); tyilan = to be taboo. /122/

A complete listing of the bityi is probably impossible, but a brief classification may be attempted by distinguishing /the following/:

Food prohibitions and prohibitions of actions.

Among prohibitions of actions there are those protecting certain animals, marriage prohibitions, and general sexual prohibitions.

Individual prohibitions and collective prohibitions.

Hereditary prohibitions and personal prohibitions.

Temporary and permanent prohibitions.

Masculine, feminine, and age-grade prohibitions.

Ordinary prohibitions (zesé bityi) and capital prohibitions, bityi awu (mortal ones).

All together they form a sort of network that covers every act, every phase of individual and social conduct. Mission activity and general development have caused some to disappear or have lessened the immediate consequences of infractions, minsem, but enough remain with sufficient sanction to influence the whole of day-to-day life.

688 A nsem, a breaking of a prohibition, has various consequences, ranging from a slight illness to death, and almost always carrying with it public reprobation. The nsem may be unconscious, the culprit being unaware that his act was taboo for him, either because he had not been taught so or because the étyi had been imposed without his knowledge by a magician.

788 Some bityi appear to be connected with totemism: these are the bityi mekam, protective prohibitions, forbidding members of certain clans to kill certain animals or to eat certain plants. Others are undoubtedly connected with the social structure, like sex or age-grade prohibitions, the breaking of which strike at the family hierarchy. Others may be described as hygienic prohibitions, like those connected with pregnancy, illness, or convalescence. There are prohibitions connected with magic: personal taboos vis-à-vis some animal seen in a dream after a family initiation, or imposed when joining an association; prohibitions pronounced by a magician, often out of revenge; prohibitions undertaken as vows to obtain a specific result. Among the Beti, Binet has known women to impose on themselves certain food etyi for a year, at the end of which time there is a party where they collect many presents from their relatives and friends. This seems to be an innovation and perhaps represents a deviation from certain Catholic practices.

[43] [177] [614]

It seems that in former times, following a war or an alliance, or in connection with an awusô relationship, two clans might undertake to respect one another's clan taboo. Besides, married women, although they did not enter the husband's clan, were supposed to some extent to respect its bityi.

783 784 Minsem can be expiated by redemption, ngôlô, according to different rites (étyi, melan among men, évolô among women), including public confession and sacrifice (for women, the sacrifice is made by father or husband, the woman undergoing severe corporal punishment). /123/

Some personal bityi can be raised (kui étyi = to emerge from a taboo) by a process similar to that of redemption for a nsem. This is never possible in cases of general sexual, age-grade, or clan prohibitions.

● 777 784 The first Christian converts must have shown genuine heroism in giving up their bityi, since they had to overcome, not only personal fear, sometimes at the cost of real psycho-physiological crises, but also unanimous public obloquy and often the vengeance of their family, which attributed to their minsem all its misfortunes. One might say that only that first generation of Christians succeeded in abandoning the bityi almost completely. The following generations, in much greater numbers, continued to observe quite a few /bityi/, certainly all those that did not openly conflict with the practice of the /new/

religion. For several years, exogamic taboos have even been observed to take on new life with a strictness that runs counter to canonical ideas about marriage (cf. above, p. 63).

g. Sorcery and Magic at the Present Time

Even in the areas longest converted to Christianity, contemporary Pahouin continue to believe in magic and sorcery, which is, moreover, not contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. Mbibiañ compete with European or African bedôkita, mingengañ compete with exorcists, mvimvi'i with the police, and so on. Once in a while beyem still kill in order to feed their évu, and I knew a kôn practitioner who tried to make use of his skill so as to win an election.

However, since the coming of the Europeans, magic and sorcery have developed in the direction of a syncretism that is sometimes baroque. Ecclesiastical schisms do not bring about a complete return to ancient practices, but a sort of grafting of what remains onto a Christian stem, to which is often added a facile /à bon marché/ esotericism borrowed from mages and fakirs of metropolitan France. Talismans, perfumes guaranteed to inspire love, and magical jewelry arrive by the hundredweight in each mail from France. Initiations that had died out are being revived in the form of parodies of the Mass or of ordination, or even of hazings often obscene. What was most valuable in the native pharmacopoeia is being more and more neglected in favor of modern preparations used at random, with only the magical aspect surviving, emptied of its old meaning and therefore of its functional character.

Admittedly, Christianity has "caught on" in the country, just as European medicine has—the question is, just how deeply. In any event it is certain that old practices, overthrown as they may have been, survive nonetheless in new forms, fluid and changing and still far from stabilized. The result is a continual uneasiness, a crisis in adaptation, of which the outcome is unpredictable.

Leaving aside any religious or ideological position, /124/ it does, however, seem possible to say as of now that one of the most revolutionary contributions of the missions has been to make women participate in the same religious cult as men.